

Testimony for **HB 5344** An Act concerning support for animals that are neglected or treated cruelly. To permit the use of animal advocates in certain legal proceedings related to neglected or cruelly treated animals.

**Judiciary Committee 2/24/26**

Karen Laski, Board Member, CT Votes for Animals

Our society has come a long way from “going home and kicking the dog” to considering companion animals as a member of the family. We’ve also come to realize that all animals are sentient beings deserving laws that protect their welfare.

With more awareness, cases of animal cruelty are discovered more often and authorities are notified although they are resolved for the most part by dismissal of charges, nolle or accelerated rehabilitation. This situation is abhorrent to people in CT and we know we can do better.

Having an animal advocate who is also a law student to help the court with cruelty cases could help solve this obstruction to justice. He or she would have the empathy needed to be a voice for the animal who has been victimized. By researching the animal control and veterinary records, the advocate will be an asset to the court by bringing a clearer picture of what the animal has been through. That knowledge will enable judicial personnel to get a better picture of the cruelty and act accordingly

As you know, animal abuse is strongly linked to present or future abuse of humans. According to the FBI, 68% of abused women reported that the abuser had also committed violence against their pets. If the animals have voices in the court system, the connection with possible family violence has a better chance of being discovered. Please support this important bill.

Thank you,

Karen Laski  
279 Fern St.  
Manchester, CT